

society for social responsibility in science

SSRS Newsletter

NO. 86

JUNE 1959

ARE SCIENTISTS MORALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR APPLICATIONS OF SCIENCE? CBS-TV DEBATES THE ISSUE; SSRS VIEW GETS NO SUPPORT

"Are scientists morally responsible for the applications of science?" This was the title of CBS television network program which was broadcast on March 15, 1959, as one of the programs of the "World of Ideas" series, with Dr. Charles Frankel, Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University, as moderator and discussion leader.

Participants in the discussion included several writers—Dexter Masters, author of "The Accident", Leazer Lipsky, author of "The Scientists", and Ralph Shultz, Managing Editor of *Chemical Week*. The panel was rounded out with two AEC employees, a General Electric Company scientist, a minister, a social worker, a sociologist, and a reporter from *Life*.

The participants in the program seemed to agree that the public is criticizing scientists for unleashing weapons of mass destruction on the world, and that the public is wrong in its criticism; scientists have the duty to discover all they can and have no right to hold back or suppress any discovery, no matter how harmful. Such decisions should be made by the people through their political leaders, the panel agreed. If the scientist has special knowledge of the danger, his duty is to warn the political authorities

about it and then abide by their decision. The example given by one of the participants on the program, and agreed to by others, was the decision to use the atomic bomb. The group which, knowing the devastating character of the new weapon, issued the Franck Report urging the bomb not be used on Japan, did the right thing. But the government, which received the petition of the scientists and then went ahead with Hiroshima, also acted "properly", one of the panelists said.

Many of the participants in this program seemed to agree that if a scientist has a discovery which can blow up the entire world, and he pours it down the drain, that scientist is acting irresponsibly.

There was also agreement that a scientist is almost never confronted with a clearcut choice between a constructive and a destructive activity. The example given was medicine, which saves lives but is used by armies to carry on a war.

Yet, at the close of the program, having decided that the decisions must not be and cannot be made by scientists, the participants were not happy at their conclusion. Said Professor Frankel in summing up: "The major problem here is the political and social problem. If you don't like the uses to which certain

Program Shaping Up for Annual Meeting

One of the features of the 1959 Annual Meeting of the SSRS (to be held September 5 and 6 at Antioch College) will be a series of discussion groups on methods and techniques for more effectively spreading the ideas for which the SSRS stands.

The four groups will be concerned with "Sources of Information," "Political Activity," "Speaking on Campuses," and "Ethics in Science Teaching."

Each of the discussion groups will use Victor Paschkis' keynote speech on "Ten Years of SSRS" as its point of departure. Specific areas of action will be explored under the leadership of SSRS members who have already participated in action in these fields.

A full program of the Annual Meeting, with information on the costs and method of registration, will soon be printed in this Newsletter, probably in the next issue.

The discussion group on "Political Activity" will be led by SSRS Newsletter Editor Truman Kirkpatrick. Names of the other leaders were not yet available at press time.

The Annual Meeting of the SSRS was held at Antioch College five years ago, in 1954; since then, all Annual Meetings have been in the Philadelphia area. It is hoped that many SSRS members from the Middle West will take advantage of the Ohio location and will plan to attend the 1959 Annual Meeting and share their thinking with other members and friends. —T.K.

scientific discoveries are put, then the problem of the scientist and the citizen is the same, namely, to go to work with that society or with the international situation if you can alter it...The question that really bothers me though is is one on which many of us have touched, the question of collective responsibility. What disturbs me is that when you talk about collective responsibility you were saying no one in particular is responsible. And I think we touched here on a social problem, a problem of social philosophy that's about as important as any in contemporary society."

PASCHKIS TRAVELS

Victor Paschkis has written the following account of his recent speaking tour. Comments are welcomed.

As readers of this Newsletter know, I have used my sabbatical leave from Columbia University to work on two concerns of mine: the one with which I want to deal here, the SSRS; the other, community relations.

In connection with our concern that the individual scientist and engineer is personally responsible for the consequences of his work for society, I spoke on many college campuses and at a few other meetings (SANE, Kiwanis, Town and Gown Club, etc.) At colleges, meetings were organized by a variety of organizations: official chapel talks, lectures organized by honor societies, action groups, the chaplain's office, meetings for faculty or for students, for the entire student body or for science students only, etc.

When starting, I anticipated considerable difficulties in getting on the campus. Instead, I found that I had more invitations than I could accept. The discussions were generally very lively, and only on one or two occasions were the students obviously unwilling to talk about "controversial matter."

My experiences on these travels, together with the old question "What can the individual SSRS member do?" led me to the following remarks and suggestions.

1) The most important growth effort should be directed towards students. While we certainly should not disregard attempts to win over mature scientists already working in the field, main emphasis should be on students.

2) Work with students should include also non-science students, particularly women; they will to a large extent become later the wives of scientists.

3) Students can be reached more readily by scientists, who speak about the SSRS stand out of first-hand experience, than by "preachers." By this word, I refer for brevity's sake to people making their livelihood from speaking on peace and moral questions.

4) Students are more readily reached by outside scientists than by their own faculty members.

5) Student population comes and

goes; thus a continued effort is necessary. Ideally, every college and university should be visited at least every two years.

6) This task is probably too big for the present size of the SSRS. But fulfillment can be more nearly approached by the existence of student chapters on the several campuses.

7) Student chapters should have a faculty advisor.

Thus, I would suggest:

A) That every SSRS member should seek as many speaking engagements in colleges as he can manage.

B) That SSRS members who are on college faculties explore the possibility of creating student branches.

Speaking engagements can frequently be had by just writing to the college; they may be obtained (particularly in the case of church-connected schools) through central church agencies. In most cases, travel expenses are carried by the schools. (In my case, most schools contributed \$25-\$50 towards the central travel fund, plus local hospitality including overnight stay where necessary.)

Colleagues taking up this suggestion should know that college assemblies are usually limited to a time of 20-50 minutes, which frequently is frustratingly short for the presentation of a new idea. But in many instances I have found colleges more than delighted to arrange for smaller groups (for instance, class sessions) which permit discussion.

Such work can be as limited or as extended as the individual colleague wishes; from one lecture every one or two years, one can increase the contact to the limit of 4-5 per day.

In speaking, I, at least, discussed the problem of personal responsibility and only at the end of the talks (and not always even then) mentioned SSRS briefly.

No general discussion of student chapters is possible, because regulations are different on each campus. The reason for having chapters is the same as that for having an SSRS, instead of affiliation with a "cause" society; that one can reach students otherwise inaccessible.

I would appreciate comments from readers and would like to note that the **speaking** be not limited to our membership.

Victor Paschkis
Apt. 21 F, 70 LaSalle St.
New York 27, N.Y.

Amendment Passed by SSRS Meeting

A special membership meeting of the Society for Social Responsibility in Science was convened June 27, 1959 in Southampton, Pennsylvania, by President Edward Ramberg, to consider amending the statement of purpose in the Society's Constitution. The amendment, it was hoped, would improve chances of obtaining a charter of incorporation in the State of Pennsylvania. Text of the amendment was published in the May issue of this Newsletter.

SSRS Newsletter Editor Truman Kirkpatrick, who could not be present, had filed a statement critically of the proposed amendment on grounds that the scope and activities of the Society would be narrowed and its message blunted by the deletion of such phrases as "the individual must abstain from destructive work."

After lengthy and careful deliberation, the members present came to the conclusion that the amended statement of purpose would not be a significant departure from the present scope of the Society, and the amendment was officially adopted.

Books Available

Lyn Day, of the New England Regional Office of the American Friends Service Committee, has written to the SSRS Newsletter to point out that many of the books recently reviewed in our Newsletter may be purchased by mail, postpaid, at regular retail prices, from the Peace Literature Service of the New England AFSC Office. All profits go to help finance the peace education work of the AFSC. Send your check or money order to Peace Literature, AFSC, Box 247, Cambridge 39, Mass. Among titles in stock are,

BRIGHTER THAN 1000 SUNS. By Robert Jungk. English Edition. 350 pp. \$4.50.

THE GREAT DECISION. The Secret History of the Atomic Bomb. By Michael Amrine. 250 pp. \$3.95.

MAN AND THE ATOM. By Max Born. 12-page pamphlet published jointly by the American Friends Service Committee and SSRS. 20¢, 6 for \$1.00.

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LETTERS

To the Editor of the Newsletter:

The enclosed advertisement was placed in the *Columbia Spectator* of May 11 by a group of us in the graduate school. (biologists). Perhaps it could be used further.

Dick Levins
45 Tieman Place

New York 27, N.Y.

Editor's Note: The advertisement is reproduced in the adjoining column, and we are delighted for the opportunity to print a sharp bit of satire along with our heavy and serious material.—T.K.

To the Editor of the Newsletter:

The question of Intentional Community for Engineers was raised by me in this column a year ago. A reasonable response of about a dozen letters resulted, all expressing a great longing for more "intentional living". However, it was quite evident that none of those interested had ever personally experienced life in community.

This we have attempted to do, remaining as guests with the Society of Brothers here in Rifton since September 1957. The experience does not make us experts on the question of community for engineers and technically trained people. It has helped us, however, to realize what the actual task of such an undertaking implies, and this I would like to share, with the following points:

1.-A common work background, no matter how noble the purpose of it may be, is not a sufficient basis for community life.

2.-The business of living together is not possible on just the desire of the people to be good or to do good. It's not in us. There must be a cause and purpose at a deeper level, beyond the individuals concerned.

3.-Many technically trained people demand their right to work only in the specific field of their choice. I cannot conceive how this would be possible in community. The "me" complex is one of the first habits to be dropped, if people are to live together.

4.-When people give themselves to each other, a new kind of freedom, hard to describe, comes in. It is a delicate quality easily lost, turning a creative community into a hide-bound traditionalism and social custom which would only express symbolically the creativeness and freedom originally enjoyed.

5.-Community could be an escape for

some, but for most that we have met it is anything but that...

For any who have any leanings toward such a life, I would suggest a family visit to a community, to experience at first hand what such a life implies. No one needs to worry about being forced into thinking anything he doesn't fully believe. In our experience here with the Brothers, we have found a Christian Fellowship with no deceit or cunning. It welcomed us on our merits and has aimed neither to destroy what we are nor to flatter our ego. The experience has been as genuine and impartial as the rain. It has become clear to us, however, that for any community to survive requires a completeness few of us have ever experienced in contemporary society. Thurgood Marshall's statement that "you cannot be half pregnant or half dead" applies to community as well. There's no half way. It's all or nothing.

Chris Ahrens
Society of Brothers
Rifton, New York

To the Editor of the Newsletter:

Just to let you know, if you are not fully aware already, that you will be promoting the interests of the SSRS a good deal, if you will take time to note the review of "Command the Morning", by Pearl S. Buck (by V. S. Pritchett) in the July issue of the *Scientific American*, in the "Books" department.

Edward S. Schultz
450 Colvin Ave.
Buffalo 16, N.Y.

Editor's Note: Thanks. We will review it soon. Meanwhile, our readers may wish to look up the review or read the book itself. --T.K.

EMPLOYMENT

The Occupation Division of the SSRS was created for the purpose of making it easier for scientists to act according to conscience when choosing their employment. If a man loses his job because of his attitude toward performing duties involving "destructive" work, or if he leaves a job because he is conscientiously unable to perform work he deems immoral, the SSRS Occupation Division may be able to help.

All correspondence regarding the printing of ads and replies to ads should be sent to the Occupation Division Chairman, M. Jane Oesterling, Woman's Medical College, Philadelphia 29, Penna. When a name is given in the ad for a direct reply, a copy of the correspondence should be sent to Jane Oesterling.

SITUATIONS WANTED

CHEMICAL ENGINEER, 29, (trained in Hungary) seeks position in chemical industry. Experience includes manufacture of fine organic chemicals and biochemical research on bacterial systems.

PHYSICAL CHEMIST (Ph.D. candidate, coordination compounds), broad organic/inorganic background, wishes non-military research or research/teaching position with opportunity to study toward theoretical physics Ph.D. Publications and 7 years college chemistry teaching experience. Can teach introductory calculus of finite differences and treatment of experimental data. East Coast preferred, willing to travel.

SITUATIONS OPEN

CHEMIST OR CHEMICAL ENGINEER to formulate and execute broad-scope basic research program in radiation catalysis of hydrocarbon reactions. Unusual independence in a sponsored project which may lead to significant constructive application of nuclear energy. Complete analytical systems, kilocurie gamma source, nuclear reactor, and machine computation facilities available. Major eastern university. Ph.D. or equivalent experience.

ELECTRONIC ENGINEER AND ELECTRONIC TECHNICIANS for constructive work in expanding medical electronics firm. Circuit design, especially with transistors, or product development experience desired. Biophysical Electronics, Inc., 20 E. Herman St., Philadelphia 44, Penna.

ENGINEER with Master's degree in mathematics needed for teaching position in Ghana. Write: H. Muensterman, Mission Board, 1505 Race St., Philadelphia 2, Pa.

MATHEMATICIAN for teaching post at Earlham College. Opportunity to help create imaginative curriculum. Ph.D. or near Ph.D. required. Write Howard Alexander, Department of Mathematics, Earlham College, Richmond, Indiana.

SENIOR TECHNICIAN OR JUNIOR ENGINEER with minimum 3 years experience, to assume responsibility for design and construction of medical electronic equipment. Salary commensurate with experience.

SSRS Newsletter No. 86 June 1959
Society for Social Responsibility in Science
Gambier, Ohio

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